

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

WHAT THE CHURCH FOLK ARE THINKING ABOUT AND DOING.

By WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

A City's Corruption.

The International Sunday School Lesson for August 1 is "The Close of Paul's Second Missionary Journey—Corinth." Acts, xiv:1-22.

It would be required of every preacher, editor and moral teacher in a city that at least once every few months he make a quiet tour of all phases of city life—through the "tenderloin," with its, to him, shocking amusements; the variety theaters, the dance halls, the Chinese restaurants, the mill districts, the foreign quarters, the fashionable hotels and the aristocratic clubs. For the first problem of our day is the problem of the city; and it cannot be solved by men who have only a second-hand knowledge of it. An open-eyed view of things as they are is the first essential equipment of a reformer. Whosoever would improve the existing order must make all his theories bend to the ascertained facts.

Only of late is the Christian church awakening to the fact that this tremendous and increasing city problem requires new methods and new men. It is in vain that we endeavor to meet the exigencies of this extraordinary occasion by country church methods of several generations ago. An entire new book of tactics needs to be written by the leaders of the armies of righteousness. For the church simply must make good at urban centers. If she fails there, she meets her Waterloo. The tide of emigration on the part of metropolitan congregations from the districts where there are the most people, simply because these people are no longer of the old-fashioned, church-going type of native-born Americans, is an almost incredible blunder. The apostolic church boldly attacked the city problem. We find Paul face to face with Corinth and all that it involved, apostle who went to Corinth cannot be behind the church of the first century.

THE WICKEDEST CITY.

There has been more than a little talk as to which city in this Western continent merits the unenviable distinction of being the wickedest. I think I know, but to mention names would serve no good purpose. On this point there may be dispute, but it is generally conceded that in the world at large, Corinth is the wickedest. Corinth held the palm for depravity. Its very name had been changed into an adjective, and "to Corinthianize" meant to debase. With mixed population, the present-day Corinth, and like the latter city, situated at a crossroads of commerce, Corinth extended hospitality to all the vices of all the people of its day. It was the commercial and political capital of Greece, and its games were famous, so that the apostle who went to Corinth in the midst of this multimodal life for a year and a half more than once used the figure of the Corinthian games to typify the Christians' struggle with evil.

Nothing is wholly bad, and whenever one is tempted to utter a jeremiad concerning a modern city it is to be remembered that even in depraved Corinth the Lord said, "I have much people in this city." Some persons go to a modern city and discover that the name does not find themselves in touch with powerful and inspiring forces representing the highest elements in human life. Paul had no difficulty in allying himself with a real community of followers, and he governed the world; and they seem likely by their telling to bring all peoples to subjection to the Christ, concerning whom the good news is told. No argument is equal to a proved experiment. Down in the rescue missions, in the slums of the great cities, it is not eloquence that reclaims men from sudden vice, but the redemptive power of persons who had been in like case, and whom the power of Jesus had made over into new men. If any company of Christians undertake to study seriously the Book of Acts, they are certain to be animated to new efficiency in their own church.

THE CITY AS A PLAYGROUND. Paul was a city man. Yet he never became wholly inured to the wickedness and the emptiness of city life. He was as greatly affected by the frivolity of this metropolis as by its vices. The city is not only the workshop of the twentieth century, but also its playground. Men and women go to the city for a "good time." How empty and lonesome is much of the pleasure that is provided for the residents and visitors every thoughtful observer has remarked. There are few things more discouraging than a night spent on New York's "Great White Way." It is not only the people who are often vulgar and wicked, but also that they are frivolous and unsatisfactory.

Our urban civilization has created artificial standards which are vicious. The newspapers told the other day how a certain woman testified in court that she had been seduced by a man who was a kind of people easily find their way into court—that her social standing required her to wear at least three different dresses a day, each costing about \$50, and that she never wore the same dress twice in the face of such facts one cannot wonder at the presence of sullen anarchy or rampant socialism. Consider how we have multiplied the forms and accessories of what we call the good society. The modern table is not well furnished unless it has a great array of knives and forks and spoons and curious implements, until one has more property for the state of mind which has so burdened itself with useless encumbrances of an unnecessary materialism than with the conservation of the country visitor who finds himself helpless among this array of table accessories.

THE GOOD AMIDST THE BAD. Beneath all this overlay of foolish and needless extravagance which characterizes the modern city life there yet remains, even as Paul found in Corinth, a thirst for religion. Recently a young woman's Christian Association in London was making a Bible tale to a company of young people in a training school. By chance a wealthy woman and leader in aristocratic social circles entered the meeting and heard her. She requested that the association secretary spend the next Sunday at her home. This she generously did, and the next Sunday the visitor found that she was called upon to meet some thirty of her hostess' neighbors, men and women of wealth and position, some of them known to the world as social leaders. To this gorgeously arrayed company she was asked to teach the Bible. So real was her interest that she urged that she come every week to teach them in a Bible class which they would form.

THE GOOD MAN IN A BAD PLACE. Face to face with the modern city, as Paul was face to face with Corinth, the question arises for the church. Has Christianity a word for the times? Is it equal to these new hard tasks? Must it flee from the crowded, fetid polyglot downtown, to the more congenial atmosphere of prosperous uptown districts? Is Christianity, after all, a select society of the morally good and socially correct? Or is the first business of the church the worst? Is Christianity's mission primarily to the part of the society which never has its doings chronicled in the society columns of the newspapers?

Paul's example answers these questions. He plunged into the thick of the Corinthian situation. He established congenial alliances with his fellow-craftsmen and with the Jewish synagogue. At every point he made himself count as a factor for the city's uplift. He was what the modern slang would call a "good mixer."

There was not an ounce of censoriousness or Pharisaism about him. I thought of Paul the other day when with a friend my attention was called by some small boys to a supposedly drunken man, lying down in the gutter, the road among the grass. We went toward him, and while I was wondering how decently to approach the recumbent figure, my friend had quietly and naturally and sympathetically, as if he himself were a drunkard, taken the man by the shoulders, and found out whether he was sick or intoxicated, and proved himself an unaffected and interested friend.

The art of letter-writing is disappearing from our times. Even close friends are sending dictated, typewritten letters to one another. These are mere bulletins of news. The full, heart-revealing, historic-recording chronicles of older days have passed with the leisure of our grandfathers. We do not often now days entitle biographies "Life and Letters," for the modern man is not writing letters. Yet this great Book of Acts was really designed only as a letter to a friend. It is a masterpiece of literary art, which forms the bulk of the New Testament. Dr. Luke had an eager, inquiring friend. For the latter's information he set down, leisurely and in order, the history of the Christ's risen work up to date. Little did Luke know that the same Spirit whose mysterious movements he recorded was guiding his pen to the narration of a document which should be for the instruction and inspiration of the church through all ages. But, then, we never do know which of our acts God is going to use most greatly for His glory.

WHEN A LEADER GETS BLUE.

There came a point in Paul's Corinthian experience when he grew greatly cast down. These devils of discouragement beset him sorely. The mood is more common among Christian workers and men who are regarded as great leaders than the public ever dreams. In the face of a great usefulness, men are tempted often to consider the worthlessness of it all. The Lord heartened Paul by a vision, giving him that old, old word of hope, "I am with thee," assuring him that even in wicked Corinth there were many who named the Name. So it proved. Paul had to undergo personal persecution, and he was haled before the courts, and he devoted himself exclusively to the Gentiles; but in spite of it all he saw great triumphs for the Gospel in that wicked city, as his two letters to the Corinthian church reveal.

There arose a community of disciples who became very dear to the apostle, and in spite of their peculiar besettlements and delusions they remained a power for the Kingdom. The very situation of the city enabled them to radiate their influence far and wide, just as one may find in all parts of Canada men and women who have passed through Cooke's church, Toronto; or as one may meet in all cities of the country converts of the McAuley Missions in Water street, New York.

Facts and Their Motive Power.

These Comments upon the Christian Endeavor Lesson "Life Lessons for Me from the Book of Acts," Acts, xiv:1-22.

The Book of Acts is a book of facts. Its value as religious literature consists chiefly in its historical narrations. There is power in a fact. Some persons who are forever "spiritualizing" all things, and trying to "draw a lesson," need to be reminded of the dynamics resident in sheer fact. The gospel itself, in its early simplicity, was the mere narration of certain historic facts. These facts—carrying in their train, and to some, a great body of truth—have conquered, and are conquering the world; and they seem likely by their telling to bring all peoples to subjection to the Christ, concerning whom the good news is told. No argument is equal to a proved experiment. Down in the rescue missions, in the slums of the great cities, it is not eloquence that reclaims men from sudden vice, but the redemptive power of persons who had been in like case, and whom the power of Jesus had made over into new men. If any company of Christians undertake to study seriously the Book of Acts, they are certain to be animated to new efficiency in their own church.

The title of the books of the Scriptural canon are not inspired. The appellation "The Book of Acts of the Apostles" is a palpable misnomer, for at the outset this history dissembles the name of the apostles with a mere mention, giving far more space to some who are not apostles than to most of the members of that body. Peter and Paul are the principal figures, the latter occupying the larger part of the author's attention. One commentator has pointed out that the book is more truly a record of the acts of the Holy Spirit than of the acts of the apostles.

First-century Christianity is revealed as of heroic stuff by the Book of Acts. It dared and died and died the gospel might grow.

Dr. Luke was a great historian. Doubtless it was his theme that could lift him up to heights of ability of which neither he nor his friends had dreamed; even as men in public life, when called upon to produce state papers, suddenly develop uncommon literary ability. His subject matter aside, however, Dr. Luke must be credited with a simple, direct, and natural literary style. His unconscious allusions to contemporary matters have come to be profound arguments for the authenticity of his work.

Who was Theophilus, to whom two books of the New Testament were written by Dr. Luke? We do not know. He was simply an interested disciple, with a great friend. Possibly it is to his thirst for knowledge that we owe the third Gospel and the Book of Acts. Because of his quest for truth, the name is today ever embalmed in the New Testament, the greatest literature of humanity.

All kinds of characters move through the pages of the Book of Acts. Its heroes are not demi-gods, but "men in a world of men." The heroism of Christianity in practice is one of the proofs of its divine origin. It is a possible religion.

When some Chinese converts were studying the Book of Acts one of them naively remarked: "We like this book. Its people are just like ourselves. They had the same sort of temptations we have, and sometimes they stumbled just as we do." For this peevish history Gospel and the Book of Acts are a world of men. The heroism of Christianity in practice is one of the proofs of its divine origin. It is a possible religion.

The world is keen to hear a man talk who has been a part of his own story. That is why adventurers and explorers are such popular lecturers. Now Luke figured in the events he described; occasionally he lapses into the "we" of a participant. Like Chester he could say, "Of which things I also was a part." This book is journalistic in that it is so largely the story of an eyewitness.

The Book of Acts is incomplete. It is a "continued-in-our-next" story. The author purports only to tell of beginnings and continuities, but not of endings. All the significant aspects of early Christian history which Luke touches, he leaves unfinished. The end is not yet. The Book of Acts is still in the writing.

We know some of the later chapters—the persecution of the early church, the dispersion over the known world, the great gospel triumphs, the gradual corruption of ecclesiasticism, the reformation, and the new missionary era. Does it not all, like a thrilling story, make one eager to learn the end? That end we can only reach when we come to "know fully." In the meantime, we are permitted to help make the history which this unfinished volume is yet to record.

Life is best learned by living with the best people. Whoso keeps company with the characters in the Book of Acts is not likely to descend to ignominy and cowardly conduct.

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The Rev. Philip M. Rhinelander, who during Bishop Satterlee's episcopacy was rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, 11 street northeast, and who has since his resignation of that rectory position, is filling the position of professor of sociology in the Cambridge Theological School, which is located on the campus of the University of the South, at Sewanee, Tenn., to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Dr. Benjamin Lawton Wiggins. Prof. Rhinelander will probably accept the position, as it will be a congenial one to him, in view of his long association with the University of the South, which, with its board of trustees largely composed of Southern bishops, it could not but have.

Plans for a parish house for St. John's Church, Georgetown, are now being prepared by Mr. Walter Peter, architect. The erection of the building will be begun this summer, and it is expected that it will be ready in the fall. It will be a "walk-out" on the part of the church, and will have such a workshop for such of the qualifications is that in order to be eligible to play on the team each player must attend a Sunday-school or a brotherhood meeting two Sundays each month, and must not play back with anybody on Sunday. In Maryland City there are nine such teams in the league.

The chapel car St. Anthony, belonging to the Paullist Fathers, is now touring and conducting missions throughout the Northwest with Rev. Dr. A. P. Doyle, of the Apostolic Mission House, Washington, and the Rev. Alva Doran in charge.

Two of the numerous Lutheran bodies in the United States have agreed to consolidate the Synod of Missouri and the German Lutheran Synod, which covers both Canada and the United States. The rule of the German Synod against the use of the English language has been rescinded. There are something more than 50,000 church members involved in the union.

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A "retreat" for Catholic laymen has been inaugurated at Fordham College, New York, by the fathers in charge. The Vatican has established an institute of biblical studies at Rome, which is intended primarily for the preparation of a number of the officials. To overcome the lack of musicians he has lately installed a large phonograph, and sacred hymns are rendered by grand opera singers.

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The religious and social betterment work being carried on by the Shiloh Baptist Church (Strangers' Home) is being enlarged. One new station was opened last week in the northwest, and open-air Gospel and temperance services were held in five alleys during the week just closed.

Will Supply Bibles. The Christian Endeavor Society of Shiloh Baptist Church recently appointed a committee, of which Mrs. Mary Dixon is chairman, to supply large print Bibles and Testaments for use of the inmates in several of the hospitals in the city.

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GAY PARENTS.

The children of our neighborhood don't train their parents as they should; they let the latter go their gait, and do not try to keep them straight, and so those giddy parents roam, at sinful hours, away from home. They try to cheer their foolish hearts, joy riding in the devil cars; or you will find, when they are missed, that they are playing bridge or whist, or wasting all the golden day in some absurd and useless way. When I was young I seldom saw a sporty pa or giddy ma; the children of that elder day had parents tutored to obey; the mothers seldom left their tubs to fool around at euchre clubs, and fathers, when the day was dead, took off their rags and went to bed. Ah, seldom then were children seen, with furrowed brow and somber mien, distraught by galling dancing dads, or mas who played the cards for seads! O children, to yourselves be true! Round up the gallivanting crew of parents who are trotting fast before it is too overlast—ing late to give the bunch a chance; come forth, O children, from your trance!

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WALT MASON.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH NEWS

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A Philadelphia Methodist preacher who was not welcomed to the church to which the bishop had appointed him had to face a "walk-out" on the part of the choir and a number of the officials. To overcome the lack of musicians he has lately installed a large phonograph, and sacred hymns are rendered by grand opera singers.

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The choir of St. John's, Georgetown, has been for its annual outing, camping for two weeks on the banks of the Southern River, under the management of the choirmaster, Mr. Williams. Evidently the boys have had a good time, and will enter on their duties again with enthusiastic zeal.

Rev. J. H. Blake and Rev. Frederick B. Howden have entered into an arrangement by which the Very Rev. Dean Pike, of Atlanta Cathedral, will conduct service alternately in Christ Church and St. John's Church on the last three Sundays in August and the first in September.

Dean Pike has been in charge of the Cathedral of Atlanta since 1905. He is the former rector of St. James', Marietta, Ga.

The family of Rev. James H. W. Blake, the rector of Christ Church, Georgetown, is staying at Mountain Lake Park, Md., for the summer. The rector goes up for a few days between the Sundays, but during August he will be away from the city altogether and so obtain a much needed rest.

Rev. Dr. McKim has been spending some time at Divonne, in France. He was well and enjoying his vacation when heard from at this French town.

The Rev. W. J. Denzilow Thomas is having good success in the parish at Brookland, to which he went on resigning the diocesan missionship he held so acceptably. There has been no building in the parish heretofore suitable for a schoolroom, nor did the church ever possess a font, but by the rector's efforts these two needs are being supplied. Both Langdon and Rosedale are in this parish. At Langdon the work is particularly flourishing. Open air services marked by much interest and enthusiasm have been a leading feature of it.

Bishop Harding and the Revs. R. H. McKim, C. Ernest Smith, Herbert Scott Smith, and J. Henning Neilsen are on the pastors' co-operating committee.

The Rev. E. E. Mott, of the Church of the Advent, will spend August in St. Georges Island, St. Mary County. St. Georges Island is near the mouth of the Potomac, and with the beautiful scenery of St. Mary's River close at hand, it is a favorite holiday resort for some of the Washington clergy and members of their congregations.

The consecration of the Rev. Benjamin Brewster as Bishop of Western Colorado completes the roll of our domestic missionary bishops. The domestic bishops now number twenty-two; the foreign ten.

CHURCH SERVICES TO-MORROW IN WASHINGTON AND ITS VICINITY.

Notes for these columns should reach The Herald office by 9 p. m. Friday.

EPISCOPAL.

ST. THOMAS' CHURCH, 11th and D sts. NW. Services, 8 and 11 a. m. Sermon at 11 by Rev. Canon Austin.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, 5th and A sts. NW. Rev. W. L. De Vries, Ph. D., and Rev. R. A. Curtis, clergy. Services, 7:30, 11, and 8. The rector will preach at 11 and 8.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, 23d st., near Washington Circle. Rev. Robert Talbot, rector; Rev. W. H. Merriam, assistant rector. Holy